

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Earthquake Fuels Project

Finding of No Significant Impact

DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2011-0520-EA

September 26, 2011



BACKGROUND

The Proposed Action Alternative evaluated under Environmental Assessment (EA) # DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2011-0520 (page 3) is to create a fire resistant strip of vegetation along approximately 10 miles of dirt road east of Fairview Peak, in Churchill County, Nevada. The size of this unit is 1,659 acres. The restoration strategy would include a prescribed fire application to remove the existing plant material, a chemical treatment to control the annual weed (cheatgrass) invasion and a reseeding effort to create a more fire resistant plant community.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based upon the review of the Earthquake Fuels Project DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2011-0520-EA and its associated administrative record, it is my determination that the implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in EA # DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2011-0520 and that the Proposed Action Alternative is in conformance with the Carson City Field Office Consolidated Resources Management Plan (CRMP) adopted in 2001. I have determined that the proposed Action is not a major federal action, and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. Therefore, the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) or a supplement to the existing environmental assessment does not need to be prepared.

CONTEXT AND INTENSITY

This finding and conclusion is based on the consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the *context* and the *intensity* of impacts described in the EA or as articulated in the letters of comment.

Context: The Proposed Action Alternative is a site-specific action located on public lands administered by the BLM CCDO in Churchill County, Nevada which by itself does not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance.

Intensity: The following discussion is based on the relevant factors that should be considered in evaluating intensity as described in 40 CFR 1508.27:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant affect may exist even if the Federal agency as described believes that on balance the affect will be beneficial.

I have determined that none of the direct, indirect or cumulative impacts associated with the Proposed Action Alternative are significant, individually or combined. The EA evaluated both beneficial and adverse impacts of the Earthquake Fuels Treatment. Potential impacts include ground disturbing activities associated with fire line construction, drill seeding and the application of Imazapic. Other short term impacts include disturbance to vegetation, noxious weeds, invasive weeds, general wildlife, migratory birds, BLM sensitive species, health and safety (EA sections 4.0 - 5.0).

The Proposed Action Alternative, to create a fire resistant strip of vegetation along approximately 10 miles of dirt road east of Fairview Peak, in Churchill County, Nevada would be consistent with the CRMP, improve the diversity of vegetation and reduce fire hazard fuels.

Implementation of the Proposed Action is expected to be beneficial for wildland fire management, vegetative resources, invasive non-native species management, wildlife habitat,

livestock grazing, and soils. The action results in a strategic fuel break that will make wildland firefighting techniques more effective in a remote area of the District.

The BLM Contracting Officer Representative (COR) and Project Inspector (PI) assigned to the project will be responsible for ensuring contract personnel abide by the contract specifications and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) (EA pages 3 and 4). Ongoing monitoring, to ensure fuels treatment objectives are being met, will be continued in accordance with the SOPs (EA page 4)

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

The Standard Operating Procedures for Herbicide Application (EA pages 3 and 4), and an approved prescribed fire plan would be used during the implementation of this project and are designed to protect human health and safety. The Proposed Action Alternative would have minimal affect to public health or safety.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The BLM Interdisciplinary Team (ID) identified the following Supplemental Authorities as being not present and present/not affected: Air Quality, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Environmental Justice, Farm Lands Prime or Unique, Forests and Rangelands, Floodplains, Threatened and Endangered Species (plant and animal), Wastes Hazardous or Solid, Water Quality, Wetlands/Riparian Zones, Wild and Scenic Rivers and Wilderness. The ID team identified the following Supplemental Authorities as being present/may be affected: Cultural Resources, Human Health and Safety, Invasive, Nonnative and Noxious Species, Migratory Birds, and Native American Religious Concerns. Resources other than Supplemental Authorities identified as being present/may be affected include: BLM Sensitive Species, Fire Management/Vegetation, Land Use Authorization, Recreation, Visual Resource Management, and Wildlife Key Habitat. The Supplemental Authorities and Resources other than Supplemental Authorities that may be present and may be affected were evaluated in EA # DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2011-0520.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The effects of the Proposed Action on the human or natural environment were determined to be negligible. Based on our review of public comments and the project analysis, we do not find any highly controversial effects to the human environment.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

Similar projects conducted by Department of Interior agencies have exhibited the desired change in vegetation composition and structure. The analysis is based on our best use of available research and data. The level of risk associated with the implementation and results of this project are recognized and acceptable.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

There has been no indication that a precedent for future actions with significant effects will be established by implementation of the Proposed Action.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

All resource values were evaluated for cumulative impacts and determined that cumulative impacts will be negligible.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

Prior to implementation of any ground disturbing activities a survey will be completed to determine if the resources of concern are present. Design criteria, such as designating avoidance areas, will maintain their integrity and prevent adverse effects.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA of 1973.

As described in the EA, no known threatened/ endangered species (plant or animal), or critical habitat has been identified in the project area considered in the EA.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The Proposed Action Alternative is in compliance with the CRMP. The Proposed Action is consistent with Statutes, regulations and policies of neighboring local, county, State, Tribal governments and other federal agencies. The Proposed Action Alternative does not violate or threaten to violate any federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.


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09/26/2011
Date